



PROPOSED BARRINGTON TOWN HALL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Residents have posed a number of questions to the Board of Selectmen to better understand the reasons for the proposal to build a new Town Hall on the site of the old Town Hall which is scheduled to be demolished this fall. Below are answers from the Board to questions posed to date, grouped by topic, along with directions to consultant reports, architect materials and other detailed information available online. Additional questions can be sent to the Selectmen at townhall@metrocast.net; we'll add any new Q&As to this document.

Current Town Offices Building/Rental:

Q: What is the annual cost to the town to rent the present office space on Route 125?

A: The total cost for the rental of space in 2015, including the off-site storage space, is \$61,933. In addition, we pay about \$860 monthly for electricity and \$7,000/year for heat.

Q: Why can't we just buy the building the town offices are in now?

A: The assessed value of the building and lot is \$481,100. The Selectmen did consider purchasing the building, and the owner gave a ballpark sale price in the \$750,000 range. The Selectmen have not attempted to negotiate a sale for the following reasons:

- The space is inadequate for the town's needs for a number of reasons (see Space Needs question below). We would need to purchase additional land to expand the building and parking lot to meet the town's needs, or take additional land under eminent domain, an option the Selectboard was not comfortable with.
- The configuration of the present space is not well suited to the town's needs. The interior would need to be significantly reconfigured and expanded to include meeting space and storage.
- The entrance/exit for the site on busy Route 125 is dangerous.

Q: Why don't we just continue to rent the building we are using?

A: The Selectmen have concluded that the building does not meet the town's needs, for the reasons detailed in replies to other questions. We will continue to rent this location as long as we don't have a better option, and as long as the owners wish to continue the relationship at a fair rental rate. The cost of renting versus the annual cost of a bond payment for a new Town Hall building is addressed below.

Location:

Q: Why is the location of the old Town Hall on Ramsdell Lane being proposed as the site for the new Town Hall?

A: The proposed site has many advantages: since it is already owned by the town, it is the least expensive building lot; it is centrally located in town; it will allow for storage space for the Rec Dept next to the Rec's playing fields; there is adequate space for parking; the lot is a "known quantity" and will be less expensive to develop than other properties owned by the town.

Q: Will there be space for a new library on the same site as the proposed Town Hall?

A: Yes, there is space for a future new library building on the site, with shared parking and potentially some shared infrastructure (well, septic). The town and the Library Trustees are using the same architect, who is designing the town hall with a prospective library in mind. This shared location adjacent to the present library/Rec building (which the Rec would fully occupy when the library moves to a new building) has other advantages, since both the Rec and Library serve the school population at the ECLC on a daily basis and the Library also supports the summer camp program participants on rainy days.

Q: What about a site in the Village District, such as behind Calef's Store, the building on Commerce Way, or next to Public Safety Building?

A: The Selectmen have looked at these sites and others in the Village District.

- The Calef family has offered to sell the 14 acre lot behind the Country Store to the town, but the price for the land would add significantly to the cost of the project (about 25%). Since the town owns an acceptable alternative site (Ramsdell), the Selectmen felt it was fiscally unwise to pursue this site. Since then the property has been sold to a private developer and will remain on the tax rolls.
- The building on Commerce Way is essentially a shell requiring significant reconstruction to serve as office and storage space, is no larger than the present rented office space, and lacks sufficient land for parking. The Selectmen concluded the site is inadequate to meet the town's needs.
- The Public Safety Building is on a lot which has considerable wetlands, rendering much of it unbuildable. We also need to preserve what little buildable land exists there for future expansion of the police/fire/rescue facility.
- The land adjacent to the Christmas Dove was offered to the town. The town evaluated the property when it was available to us and determined that it would not support two buildings (town hall and library), and the offer of the land has since been withdrawn by the family for business reasons.

The Proposed Building:

Q: With use of technology, can't we store more records electronically and save on storage space?

A: State Law requires municipalities to retain paper records (RSA Chapter 33-A –disposition of municipal records, section 33-A:3-a.) We are currently renting 1,000 square feet of storage space to house town records offsite. Off-site storage is inconvenient and inefficient when staff needs to access historical documents and return files to the storage unit.

Q: What cost savings and green building concepts are included in the proposal?

A. The new town office building has been located on the site to take advantage of passive solar heat gain, but then incorporates a large overhang to shade the windows during the hottest months of the year. This orientation also allows the town to incorporate a roof mounted PV (solar) array in the future if it wishes.

We have designed the project around a high performance thermal envelope with insulating concrete form (ICF) walls; spray foam and cellulose in the attic and insulation under the concrete slab provide R-values in excess of the energy code. This strategy also provides a very tight enclosure, minimizing heat loss through air infiltration. Heating and cooling of the building is provided through high efficiency air source heat pumps and an integrated energy recovery ventilation system.

Lighting is provided by LED fixtures with integrated daylight and occupancy sensors. Interior finishes are selected around low emitting materials to increase the air quality for the occupants.

Q: What needs does the present town office not meet? Can the proposed building be made smaller? Why do we need meeting space when most committees/boards only meet a couple times a month.

A: The town's architect conducted a detailed space analysis to determine exactly how much space we need to house town offices and conduct the town's business, including routine public meetings. That analysis is posted on the town website. (Go to the home page—www.barrington.nh.gov—and scroll down to "Where do I go for?", then click on "Town Hall Studies".) We assumed that town office staff would not grow appreciably in the coming years, so did not incorporate excess space in the office design. The proposed design has 10,104 gross square feet (GSF), less than recommended in the space analysis survey. In addition there is 1,447 GSF of storage space in the basement for use by the Rec Department.

In order to make Selectboard, Planning Board and other public meetings available for viewing on TV or online, we need to have a space where good quality recordings can be made. In addition to sessions of boards and committees, the meeting space is designed to be used by other community groups for public events, and can be subdivided into two smaller meeting areas to accommodate multiple meetings.

Q: If the proposal receives the necessary vote in March, when would the new building be ready to occupy?

A: The building schedule projects completing in December 2016. The lease on the rented space expires in August 2017 but can be terminated earlier.

Costs of Proposed Building and Related Expenditures:

Q: What will it cost to build the new Town Hall?

A: \$2,900,000. The Selectboard has bid out the project. The low bid was accepted at \$2,424,000. In addition there are \$576,000 projected for costs such as contingency, architectural oversight, furniture, moving and other costs not included in the bid.

The cost to each taxpayer will be determined by several factors: the amount of money to be raised, the bond interest rates at the time we go to the Municipal Bond Bank, and the total taxable property in town over which the cost will be spread. It is projected to add 16 cents to the tax rate starting in 2017. The cost is projected to be \$40 a year for an average \$250,000 home.

Q: What will the proposed building cost the town to operate annually?

A: This will be an energy efficient building that should operate at or below the cost of the current buildings. Conceptual energy modeling was performed early in the design process to assess building envelope and mechanical system options. The annual operating expenses with the selected systems were projected to cost \$13,000, based on \$0.19/kwh electric rate. Other heating systems were projected to cost as high as \$21,000 per year based on average propane costs. As to other normal operating expenses, those are expected to be similar to current costs, except that we won't be paying the landlord's property tax bill (currently \$12,133).

Q: Why has so much been spent on studies? How much has been spent and what for?

A: The town has spent around \$300,000 on studies, including a number of examinations of the old Town Hall's mold and construction problems (totaling \$102,613). Around \$200,000 has been spent on civil engineering and design work related to the proposed new building, including developing the detailed specifications and bidding the project.

The air quality problems of the old building, which lead to its evacuation in 2011, were examined by a number of experts in that field. The Selectboard was committed to solving those problems through a renovation of the old building, and brought two proposals to voters over the years. Both proposals were voted down for a number of reasons, the major ones being cost and the lack of confidence that the problems could be solved. Once it became clear that the building could not be renovated to voters' satisfaction, the Board put it into the 2015 budget to demolish the building, which received voter approval in March 2015, and focused on new construction, which has the benefit of greater efficiencies and long term utility.

The reports from all the studies and architectural work are posted on the town website. (Again, go to the home page—www.barrington.nh.gov—and scroll down to "Where do I go for?", then click on "Town Hall Studies".)